

86TH CONGRESS }
1st Session }

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES }

REPORT
No. 771

AUTHORIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARCTIC WILDLIFE RANGE, ALASKA

AUGUST 5, 1959.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the
State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. BONNER, from the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 7045]

The Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 7045) to authorize the establishment of the Arctic Wildlife Range, Alaska, and for other purposes, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

The purpose of the bill, H.R. 7045, is to assure the establishment of a new wildlife range within the State of Alaska. The area selected is approximately 120 by 140 miles in size and is located at the northeast corner of the State. It is about the midpoint of the annual migration of the caribou and is of sufficient size and diversity of terrain to assure reasonable protection of this species.

The area is located at the Arctic Circle and is virtually untouched, being visited by but a few sportsmen each year. The committee believes that it is essential to set aside the area at this time to avoid the experience in other States where it has been necessary to reacquire lands at considerable expense and effort for the protection of particular species after the area has undergone a degree of development and division among various owners and interests.

The State of Alaska has indicated opposition to the bill based upon the fact that although the area represents less than 2 percent of the total area of the State, it would have an adverse effect upon the sum allocated to the State under the Federal-aid-to-highways program. In view of the fact that a considerable portion of the area has already been set aside, and thus excluded from the highway aid formula, the additional land to be affected by this bill would result in a loss to the State of but \$275,000 under the maximum allocations. At the same time, the Federal Government is planning to return to the public

domain a number of very large areas within that State, and the net effect of the two transactions will be a very considerable gain to the State of lands upon which highway aid is calculated.

Under existing authority the Secretary of the Interior has the power to set aside lands for the purpose of this bill but lacks the power to control interests in the land under the mining laws and mineral leasing laws of the United States. The bill, while permitting location, entry, and patent as well as leasing under those laws, provides that patts issued for mineral deposits shall not convey any interest in the surface of the land other than that actually necessary to the removal of the minerals.

This bill would make no changes in existing law.

The bill was the subject of an executive communication from the Department of the Interior and a copy follows:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington D.C., April 30, 1959.

Hon. SAM RAYBURN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Enclosed herewith is a draft of a proposed bill, to authorize the establishment of the Arctic Wildlife Range, Alaska, and for other purposes.

We recommend that such proposed legislation be referred to the appropriate committee and that it be enacted.

This proposed legislation would permit the establishment of a wildlife area in the State of Alaska to be known as the Arctic Wildlife Range. The purpose of this reservation would be the preservation of wildlife and wilderness values in the particular area. Recognizing that the Defense requirements of our Nation are a major consideration, present or future Department of Defense operations in the area would not be affected. Furthermore, use of the area for other purposes would be permitted in a manner that would not impair the intent of this legislation.

Looking ahead 50 years to the unfolding story of Alaska's development, it is clear that the only economically feasible opportunity for maintaining a wilderness frontier large enough for the preservation of the caribou, the grizzly, the Dall sheep, the wolverine, and the polar bear, all of which require a sizable unrestricted range, lies in this northeastern Arctic region of the State.

Our studies of this matter have led to the selection of an area as set forth in this bill that we believe should be preserved for the purposes in question. This area extends eastward from the Canning River to the Canadian border and inland to include a portion of the south slope of the Brooks Range. At its largest dimensions, the area would be roughly 120 miles from east to west and 140 miles from north to south.

The proposed Arctic Wildlife Range offers an ideal opportunity, and the only one in Alaska, to preserve an undisturbed portion of the Arctic large enough to be biologically self-sufficient. It would comprise one of the most magnificent wildlife and wilderness areas in North America, being exceeded in extent only by Canada's Wood Buffalo Scientific Study Area, which is further south and represents a different habitat.

The portion of the Arctic plain included in the proposal is a major habitat, particularly in summer, for the great herds of Arctic caribou. The countless lakes, ponds, and marshes found here are nesting grounds for large numbers of migratory waterfowl that spend about half of each year in the United States. Thus, the production here is important to a great many sportsmen. The river bottoms with their willow thickets furnish habitat for moose. This section of the sea-coast provides habitat for polar, bears, Arctic foxes, seals, and whales.

The Arctic caribou herds use all of the Brooks Range in summer and the south side particularly in winter. This unmodified region is important for game management research, particularly on caribou range problems. The Dall sheep are year-round residents and, like the caribou, occur in greater total numbers here than in other parts of Alaska. Moose and grizzlies are common. Wolverines are seen occasionally. Ptarmigan are numerous. This spacious, unaltered habitat would permit the reintroduction of the musk ox. The south slope of the Brooks Range meets the year-round requirements for all of the native wildlife.

In elevation and grandeur, Mount Michelson (9,239 feet) and Mount Chamberlain (9,131 feet) in this particular region are exceeded by no other in the Arctic Circle except for some in Greenland and Siberia.

For the wilderness explorer, whether primarily a fisherman, hunter, photographer, or mountain climber, certain portions of the Arctic coast and the north slope river valleys, such as the Canning, Hulahula, Okpilak, Aichilik, Kongakut, and Firth, and their great background of lofty mountains, offer a wilderness experience not duplicated elsewhere in our country.

In the circumstances, we consider this proposal to be desirable for accomplishment of the purposes that we have outlined. We believe this proposal is adaptable to this particular area in that it will provide a practical method of realizing the public benefits to which we have referred and at the same time will permit other uses in the area, such as mineral activities. This bill would permit the Secretary to authorize mineral activity within the range while at the same time it would include the appropriation of title to the surface of the land.

The Bureau of the Budget has advised us that there is no objection to the submission of this proposed legislation to the Congress.

Sincerely yours,

FRED A. SEATON,
Secretary of the Interior.

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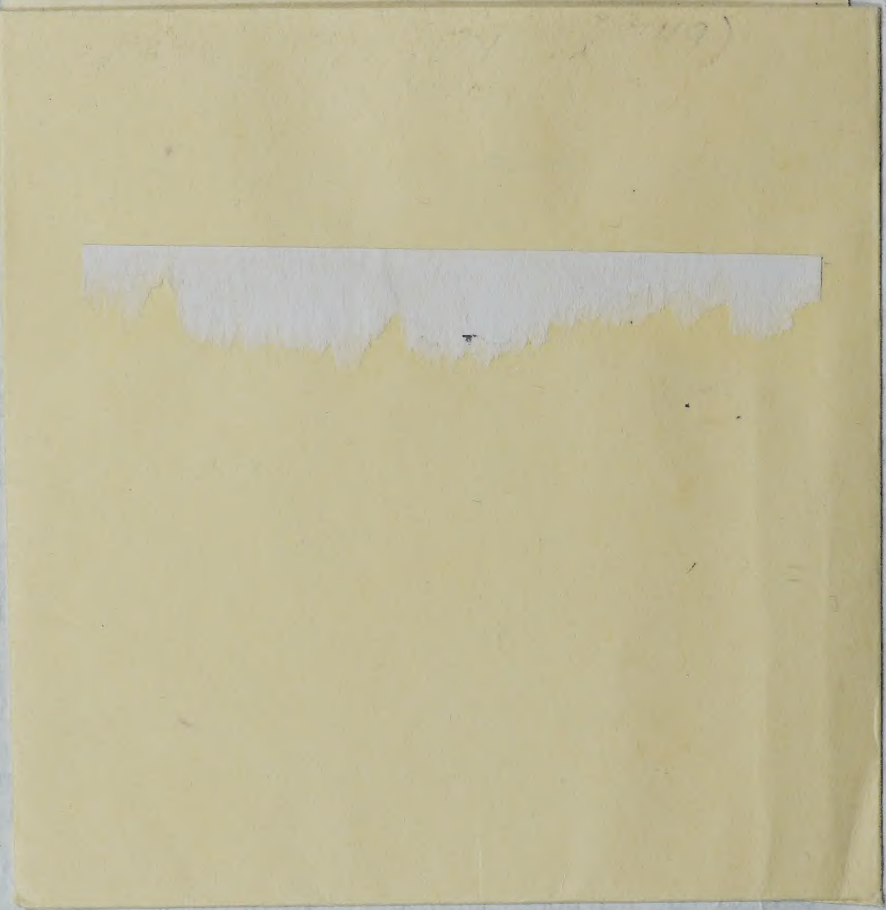
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